

HOW TO SEEK GOOD IDEAS

When an employee makes a remark about something being a waste of time, encourage him to talk about it - encourage him to think of possible improvements and to propose a better way!

One of the greatest obstacles to improvements is the old bugaboo of "resistance to change." Complacency, the feeling that all's right with the world, especially with us, is a comfortable feeling. The reason for this is due to habit formation which is both a blessing and a curse. It enables us to do our daily routine, but at the same time it is a barrier to change and progress. All of us tend to resist any change in our daily routine. Many times the thought that comes into our mind is - we've done it this way for a number of years; it's working successfully; why change it?

Each of us has a built-in traffic light in our mind. Our normal reaction when presented with a new idea is to turn on the red light. The unfortunate part of this is that when the red signal is flashing, it's like bouncing a ball of a barn door; nothing goes through. The idea can be the best one in the world, but we are unlikely to accept it.

Turning the green light on when presented with an idea is one of the most important things you can do to get employee involvement in improving the way things are done in your unit. It is only by being willing to listen and to look for the good in a proposal for change, that anything worthwhile can be accomplished.

History is full of people who said it can't be done. We even have cigarette commercials on TV these days repeating the phrase, "they said it couldn't be done..." The way to overcome this attitude is to say to ourselves, when we are called upon to evaluate an idea proposed by one of our employees: "Look, let's take ten minutes with the green light on and see if there is any way that we can figure out whether it can be done." It's astonishing what happens when you agree to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative, how many ideas or modifications of an original idea become acceptable and worthwhile.

You would not be representative of the management profession if you did not say at this time: "How in heaven's name do you expect me to do all this - namely, spend some time actively encouraging worthwhile improvement ideas from my staff, and then spend some more time figuring out how they can be put to work - how can I do all this and still do my regular job?"